

Statement at SB56 on the Global Stocktake during GST Opening Plenary, 9th June 2022

Thank you Co-facilitator, distinguished delegates. My name is Jessica Beagley and I speak on behalf of the World Health Organization, the Global Climate and Health Alliance, the Lancet Countdown on Health and Climate Change, and the wider health stakeholder community.

As described by the IPCC, climate change has profound direct and indirect impacts on health and wellbeing, driving heatwaves and other extreme weather events, vector- and water-borne disease transmission, food and water insecurity, and negative mental health impacts, which already cause millions of avoidable deaths annually, undermining the right to health.

It is *essential* that the GST monitors progress towards minimising the threats of climate change to human health and wellbeing, and maximizing health benefits of climate action: Mitigation and adaptation across sectors not only reduces health impacts but can also deliver significant health co-benefits from cleaner air, healthier and more sustainable diets, more active lifestyles, and healthier and more liveable cities.

We support a sectoral approach to monitoring under the GST. Alongside other sectors, the health sector, which contributes 5% of global emissions, has a role in both mitigation and adaptation. The GST can assist in monitoring implementation of the COP26 Health Programme, under which 58 countries have committed to climate-resilient healthcare systems, 52 to low-carbon health systems, and 19 to net zero targets.

With specific regard to monitoring mitigation:

- Only 28% of NDCs updated in 2020–2021 recognise the health co-benefits of mitigation policies, but mitigation in the energy, food and agriculture, and transport sectors in line with the Paris Agreement can offer extensive health gains. In just 9 countries, improved air quality could prevent over 1 million premature deaths, healthier sustainable diets could prevent nearly 6 million deaths, and increased physical activity over 1 million deaths. These health benefits can be reaped in far shorter time frames than those in which positive changes to the climate can be observed, and can motivate and build support for further action.
- Health co-benefits offer economic returns - in China and India, costs of reducing greenhouse gas emissions could be compensated by health co-benefits alone, with partial offsetting in the United States and Western Europe. A just phase out of all fossil fuels is a public health *imperative*.
- For monitoring health and economic gains of mitigation, we support use of tools and platforms such as the CaRBonH tool and HEAT tools by WHO, Low Emissions Analysis Platform (LEAP) by the Stockholm Environment Institute, the GAINS model by the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA), and indicators of the Lancet Countdown on Health and Climate Change.

With further regard to monitoring adaptation:

- Climate change threatens to undermine the last 50 years of gains in public health. As of last year, health is one of the three sectors most often prioritised for adaptation in Parties' NDCs.
- With regards to assessing progress towards the Global Goal on Adaptation, the health community should be called upon to support decision-making on impact and response indicators and cost-benefit analyses for health actions.
- The Lancet Countdown also produces indicators to monitor interventions to protect human health in a changing climate.

With regard to financing:

- Over 65 countries have developed health adaptation policies and plans, but 70% of country survey respondents report financing as a major barrier to their national health and climate change plans and strategies. A 2018 analysis of the main multilateral funds that support climate adaptation indicated that only approximately 0.5% of 1.5 billion US dollars of disbursed funding has been allocated to health projects.

To close, we emphasise once more that through ambitious climate action:

You can save costs; you can prevent diseases; and you can save lives.

Capturing social, health and equity implications of the implementation of the Paris Agreement can build broad support for ambitious action.

Thank you.